



# CONTEXT OF LEARNING THAI FOR FOREIGNERS IN CHIANG MAI

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## ABSTRACT

The present paper studies the context of learning Thai as a second language at Chiang Mai University. Chiang Mai is the northernmost province of Thailand. At the myriad, international students came to learn Thai as their second language. Numerous courses have been opened in institutions for foreigners to study Thai. At present, learning the Thai language as a second language became popular for international students. The necessity of learning Thai for international students is a pre-requisite criterion before taking up their major study area. However, such students lack in communication skills, and the desire to improve their skills in the Thai language

**KEYWORDS:** Thai Language, Second Language, Foreigners, Basic Skills, Instructors, Students.

## INTRODUCTION:

At present, learning the Thai language is one of the pivotal subjects that foreigners pay much attention. Due to international contacts both economically, politically and culturally the necessity of learning the Thai language has increased tremendously. People wishing to come to Thailand for various reasons saw the necessity of learning Thai language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Knowing the Thai language will be one way to get to know Thailand and be able to acquire a career in Thailand. This includes having the basic knowledge of understanding the culture as a guideline.

Teaching and learning of Thai as a foreign language is becoming widespread in Chiang Mai University. Many foreigners have developed an interest in learning Thai as a foreign language. However learning and teaching of Thai as a foreign language requires good skills. There are several limitations to teaching and learning of Thai language. such as, shortage of competent instructors or experts with teaching skills. Despite having a number of learning media content in Thai language, there seemed have some difficulties in learning the Thai culture among the Foreign learners of the Thai language.

Language is an important aspect in day to day life because it enables us to communicate. Languages enable us communicate in writing and editing standards It is through the language specific issues can be communicated effectively and with transparency in conveying the messages.

A world language is a language spoken internationally, which is learned by many people as a second language. A world language is not only characterized by the number of its speakers (native or second language speakers) but also by its geographical distribution, international organizations and in diplomatic relations. In this respect, major world languages dominated by languages of European origin. The historical reason for this is the period of expansionist European imperialism and colonialism.

At the present world, the Thai language is becoming popular among foreigners. Its popularity increases even among those people residing in Thailand. At present, in Southeast Asia, there is the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) of which ten countries in Southeast Asia have cooperated to join the AEC, including Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and the Philippines.

Thailand is the centre for the AEC, so people from AEC countries used to come to Thailand to study the Thai language. Moreover, people from western countries like Japan and China are coming to study it as well. That is why some schools and universities have introduced some courses of Thai language for communications for foreigners. There are many levels of courses in the universities way from bachelor degree level to doctoral levels; so many international students come to Thailand to grasp such opportunities. A variety of Academic courses designed for those foreigner students. Thus many techniques have been used in teaching. But sometimes foreigners have a problem when they are studying it because the Thai language is tonal while theirs are not. They cannot pronounce some Thai words clearly so that some scholars are trying to create some techniques to teach them. At present, many foreigners are able to effectively communicate in Thai language. Likewise, Thai language is also taught in other countries especially in England, USA, China and Japan. Since Thai language has been taught in these countries Thai teachers have been invited to teach the language.

Teaching of Thai as a second language began in 2007 by Professor Dr. Sompong Withayasakphan at Chiang Mai University, Thailand. He tried to do the courses for Thai as a Foreign Language (TFL), and there had been many international students who came to learn the language.

## Language learning:

Language learning methods is divided into two types, these are Learning official language and natural language learning:

1. Formal language learning means learning a language that provides learners with step-by-step information taught through lessons. The teacher explains the grammar rules, including vocabulary words for practice and evaluation of students according to their ability.
2. Learning a language naturally involves learning a language in which the learner can absorb the language by themselves without the need for active teaching official, but relying on system management and compiling various information from enough environment for self-learning and knowledge.

## Learning Thai as a Second Language:

Now, it has become more popular for Chinese students to study the Thai language, and their parents are interested to send their children to Thai land to study the Thai language. Parents believe that for their children to study the Thai language is advantageous for them. This is because, with Thai Language knowledge, the students would be able to get a job in a company that the Thai language is required, such as a tour company, being an interpreter or teaching in any universities that have some relationship with Thailand.

Initially, the International College of Chiang Mai University offered admissions for Chinese students to study in various fields in English Programs, and in 2018 there were 30 Chinese students who enrolled in other subject departments in Thai programs at Chiang Mai University. For the first semester of the 2018 academic year, Chiang Mai University offered them specific courses, so they could adjust themselves to study the subjects lectured in the Thai language by Thai professors. However, the students differed in Thai language illegibility, some had studied the language during their high school period with some additional classes in Thailand for a period of either one year or 6 months. Some of these students did not know any Thai words but enrolled to study Thai with a Chinese teacher at some tutoring schools in Thailand for six or nine months or even for a year. The principal researcher, collected data regarding Thai language learning from the Chinese students enrolling at Chiang Mai University. The data aimed to develop educational efficiency and better curriculum arrangements more appropriate for students' language background.

The learning and teaching of Thai language as a foreign language progressively developed. Through The Faculty of Education, Srinakharinwirot University added the course of Learning and Teaching of Thai Language as a Foreign Language into the Curriculum of the Master Program of Thai Teaching. The aim was to support the needs for personnel with knowledge, ability and skills in teaching Thai as a second language. And from then the teaching of Thai as a foreign language got more attention continuously from central and provincial universities both public and private ones. From some informal data, it stated that during that period there were over a thousand of Chinese students attending both Thai and English programs of learning and teaching of Thai language as a foreign one in

many regions of Thailand.

The Chinese students who came to attend Thai program courses came from departments such as Economics, Tourism, Business and Thai Language. There were various types of curriculums for the Chinese students to attend: short courses of 4-6 weeks, short courses of 3 months, one year (2 semesters), two year and four-year courses depending on the cooperation agreement between the partner institutions or universities. When the students came to study at some universities, they had to take a pre-test of the Thai language for the management of appropriate classes. At any rate, most Chinese students had to take the preparation on Thai course to adjust their background knowledge and skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing until they were able to efficiently communicate and adjust themselves to Thai society, culture and environment.

Nevertheless, teaching Thai to foreigners require four basic skills to be taught simultaneously. Listening and reading skills are message receiving skills that students can quickly grasp it. Yet, both speaking and writing skills are message sending skills with are practically more difficulty, especially the writing skill with significant limitations of message transfer hence some skills are more important to emphasize. In ensuring that Thai language is taught effectively some teaching and learning materials need to be developed.

#### Teaching and learning materials of the Thai language:

Teaching of Thai culture has not yet widespread due to the lack of teaching and learning materials including the textbooks of Thai culture for foreigners are needed. The textbooks for foreigners need to be written and provided, the books will capture some cultural aspects. When they understand the content they would learn the languages better. Therefore, students should study culture concurrently because learning about culture helps to understand the way of life, concepts, thoughts, beliefs, beliefs and practices that transmitted in spoken language.

One of the challenges associated with teaching and learning Thai as a foreign language is said to be the shortage of teaching and learning materials. Much more work needs to be done so as to improve the learning of the Thai language by the foreigners. This is because there are cultural content in which they could be explained better in these teaching and learning materials when understood well they would simplify the learning process.

Thai appears very little both the textbook and in learning media that is important and necessary for learning. If enough of these materials would be available, the teaching of foreign languages would benefit both students and teachers. This is because the textbook is a way to define content for teachers, set various teaching activities and methods of measurement and accurate evaluation. It is also a vital learning medium, allowing students to review their knowledge.

Therefore, to sort out this out, teachers of Thai language and culture have to compile the content from many books or documents and then adjust the format and content or choose only the lessons that are appropriate with foreign students to use as a textbook. Which some lessons may contain content that is the too difficult ability of students and not in line with the Thai language teaching and learning context as Foreign language.

Thai teachers should teach Thai way of life that can explain the characteristics of Thai culture, traditions that are consistent with the way of life, and how to preserve the lifestyle of Thai people by using the Thai language as a medium for describing the content.

The materials that can explain cultural content Thai traditions and ways of life that are included in the vocabulary necessary and appropriate for foreign learners. Somphong Witthayasapan (2006:11) said when foreigners are learning through the beginning level majority become interested in knowing the Thai culture. It seemed that Thai traditions and ways of life are not as widespread as it should be, something which makes teachers to waste time in preparation of content suitable for teaching and learning foreign learners.

Also, the researcher found that Thai textbook as a foreign language for learners with a high level of competency with content about traditions, ways of life and several vocabulary related to social and cultural contexts. Incorporating the Thai way of life in Thai language textbooks for foreigners is of great importance. And the interest that creates a Thai textbook on Thai way of life for foreign learners with academic ability Thai language at a high level which the results from this research used as a model for teaching Thai in as a foreign language that focuses on the Thai way of life. To explain the knowledge of Thai people's way of life that appears in Thai for foreigners who are interested in studying Thai language and can also be used as teaching materials Thai language as a foreign language and as a guideline for further development of teaching media.

#### CONCLUSION:

The textbook should have integration of all four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, and Thai culture in various fields. The textbook emphasizes learners to use a polite word in real life. Choosing vocabulary when talking to people of different levels. Listening etiquette, questions and answers, and writing on various occasions, etc. Creating a textbook that integrates communication and cultural skills.

Allowing the learners to learn the language and culture at the same time and make the textbooks more exciting than learning only one language course and the textbook should focus on the learners to remember easily.

There is a need to use short and meaningful sentences. Focus on teaching basic sentences that are necessary and able to be used, and students can communicate both inside and outside of the classroom. Remembering the content in the textbook and communicating can create confidence and confidence in using the Thai language very well.

Textbooks should contain some exercises that would test the learners' understanding levels of the content in the textbook. Provide the content of the study which suits the level of the learners by studying samples or guidelines from the textbook.

The teaching and learning content should be divided into three important parts these are: Introduction to teaching Thai as a foreign language. Secondly, dividing the level of content and methods of teaching Thai as a foreign language. Thirdly, the media activities and assessments of teaching Thai as a foreign language is an important and necessary basis for teaching Thai as a foreign language. These parts can be helpful and those who are interested in "the science of teaching Thai as a foreign language" will also understand the principles of teaching Thai as a foreign language.

It was found that Thai language courses for foreigners currently offered are suitable for both for learners of Thai as a second language. It is also concluded that the teaching techniques that teachers were using were of good standards though more teaching materials are needed to be made available. The use of a data highlighted format would enable easy learning of Thai as the second language. The media and teaching and learning tools that teachers should use first are multimedia such as CDs, videos, DVDs, and tapes.

Learning of Thai as the second language would be more productive when teachers who are teaching Thai attend and participate more seminars that would increase their knowledge of the teaching of Thai as a foreign language.

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